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De Kay, John

An appeal to the dreamers and toilers

Bern

1919

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De Kay, John, 1872-
An appeal to the dreamers and toilers, by John De Kay... Chapter 17 of "The World allies" pub... 1917. Bern, Benteli, 1919.
13 p. 20 cm.

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## TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 9:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 8-11-97 INITIALS: PB

TRACKING # : 23678

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# An Appeal to the Dreamers and Toilers

by

John de Kay

Author of

"The World Allies"

A Survey of Nationalism, Labour and World-Trade, and a Remedy for Wage-Slavery and War

The following is chapter 17 of "The World Allies", published in Switzerland in the autumn of 1917

1919 — Printed by Benteli Ltd., Bern-Bümpliz (Switzerland)

gift of the author
7/12/19

8 June 1920 Sun

# AN APPEAL TO THE DREAMERS AND TOILERS.

I think I have arrived by various routes at a point which makes it clear that in all important concerns of economics and government the world is under the unethical supremacy of the strong. The general misery of the helpless masses may be traced to the operation of the primitive instincts which have controlled mankind through the ages. These instincts cannot be changed. In the present conflict, inaugurated and continued by plutocracy, the masses are unable to obtain the slightest relief from any system of religion, or from any of the institutions which rest upon the toil of generations of the common man.

Their boasted structures of liberty, equality and fraternity have been stifled under mountains of shot and shell. The world is bankrupt and millions of patient toilers are buried together with the lost wealth which was created by the patient labour, the deprivation and misery of a world of underpaid toilers through generations. These poor men had no quarrel with one another. They were friends, but the forces which have operated to destroy them during the past three years will remain in operation and will again and again bring havoc upon the earth unless they are brought under the control of a superior power. This power can never be created or applied through governments. It must rest exclusively in the hands of toil. It must be able to accord or withhold its sanction respecting all events of consequence affecting the life of mankind and it must be sufficiently final and arbitrary in its vast power to make its deci-

sions a mandate or a veto concerning all the policy and conduct of industrialism and governments.

The toilers cannot take out of the hands of governments the powers which have been accorded by the ruling caste by any measures which depend for their success upon the action of governments.

The principle of liberty remains as a theory which has been confided to the keeping of legislators, but the practice of legislators is to substite despotism for liberty whenever it suits the interests of the ruling caste to take back what has nominally been accorded as rights to the masses. It is to put an end to this travesty upon the name of justice that the toilers must create the great counter-balancing power which can lay its iron hand upon industrial exploitation, upon the devices of plutocracy and upon the tyranny of all governments.

These patient millions have been forced to drink their bitter cup to the last drop, but the day is near when they may rise out of their misery and despair and take their stand as free men in the exercise of a real freedom which they are never again to lose so long as the world lasts.

To arrive at that high destiny there is only one safe and effective course and that is through a world brotherhood formed solely for the economic protection of the toilers. Every other question is subsidiary and all other expedients will fail.

It is no longer possible for the world's toilers to remain in the isolation created by nationalism and by the prejudices of so-called patriotism. The interest of the toilers is a common interest which does not differ in any essential particular in any part of the world. The unity of interest among nations arises from the international understanding of capital and from the development of communication, the specialization of industry and the facility and profit of world-trade, and the hostilities arise from the greed of plutocracy, the ambition of imperialists and the dominion exercised over alien peoples without their consent. Nations are linked to the destiny of one another and labour has a universal and



common interest. All toilers are citizens of a world-empire. It is the empire of toil, of human struggles, of eternal hopes and common rights. Their interests are not divisible and their power should not be divided.

In peace and in war the toiler is regarded everywhere the same. It is only the toiler himself who has not risen to a world-view of his position. He is under the fogs of nationalism while his employer and master is international and his government is controlled by a world-plutocracy and international considerations.

All governments make a similar appeal to the toilers in time of war. They are told that they must defend their country. They are in fact their country and these common men had no wish to fight one another. They are brothers and toilers. Last and least of all they should be nationals. As toilers they had everything to lose by war and as nationals they had no occasion or desire for war.

To be able to understand how it is possible for men to bear the horrors of war it is essential to know how great are their sacrifices through the whole course of their monotonous lives. The heroism, valor, endurance and self-effacement which have been the glory of the toilers in the trenches — are the expression, on a conspicuous scale, at the mouth of the cannon, of the qualities which dominate the obscure life of those who pass their days in silent, patient and hopeless drudgery. The scribblers who record the valor of these men at the front are astonished at the universal display of the great virtues which in times of peace are never recorded, because no one cares how great are their constant sacrifices in our modern industrial feudalism.

Through generations of such sacrifices the toiler has earned a higher place in the consideration of mankind. He is entitled to a larger share of what he creates. He should have more freedom from his ceaseless grind of hardship and drudgery. He has been too patient. He has left his interests in the hands of others and they have robbed him while he toiled. He has been asleep to his peril and has been murdered in his sleep.

The ones who survive this horror will be bought and sold by industrialism for so many pennies per hour. They will be put through the old mill of toil and at the end of their life of usefulness they will be discharged as worthless things and must depend upon the support of their children or the pretentious charity of the ones who robbed them of their toil.

The patient struggle of the world's toilers is the most heroic fact of every age and their helplessness is the great tragedy of the ages.

We behold with admiration their vast works, their enormous creative ability and the stupendous wealth which are the monuments to their constant and patient industry; while we must witness with inexpressable sorrow their helplessness in everything that concerns their daily welfare and in the policy of all institutions which dispose of their liberty and their life.

Everyone believes that there are better days in store for mankind. The toilers dream of a time when they may be more comfortable and more free. No one can believe that mankind has found a reasonable solution of the problems of life and government. It requires either dense ignorance or cynical impudence to attempt to justify existing institutions, social customs, governments, industrial slavery and all the monstrous machinery of oppression and exploitation which has been built up around the activities of mankind.

Some of the pretentions of the ruling caste in past generations were more outrageous than wage-slavery. These were abolished by violence, but the people only changed masters. The present evils must be abolished by the toilers through organization, without violence, in order that they may become and remain masters. If necessity knows no law, it is even more true that toil knows no nationality. The toiler cannot wait for the slow-moving ages to pass in which nationality will be generally replaced by larger sentiments of a world-citizenship, but he can attain without great delay in the present generation, his rightful place in the industrialism of all nations through the recognition of his international



character and by acting in accordance with the necessities of his world position.

The bogey of an invasion of America or Europe from the Far East which has been used by capitalism, as one justification for armament, must be forever dismissed by a world organization of toilers.

All the small issues as to whether the plutocracy of Austria, Italy, France, England or Germany shall wave its flags over more or less territory, are only raised to obscure the vital and hidden designs of the industrial masters of the world. These designs are that the old exploitation may continue, that the masses may be deceived by the press into the belief that the new treaties mean an end to war, that armament may be made, navies maintained, despotism still take its course over alien people, and the masses be kept in ignorance as to the actual reasons why they have been plundered and destroyed.

We have witnessed in the present struggle the divergence of views expressed by labour conventions. These arose chiefly because the conventions took the form of political meetings, rather than strictly economic conferences. The press has done the thinking for the masses, so far as there has been any thinking, and conventions of men seem to be unable to depart from the habit of constituting their gatherings as a miniature parliament in which, following the customs of parliaments, they discuss everything except their own affairs! When capitalists meet to form a trust they do not waste their time discussing the vague and unimportant political issues raised by small lawyers in some cabinet, but instead they lay aside all other questions and combine.

The toilers must follow this example. They must realize that no two men have the same productive value and no two men should receive the same pay. They must understand that the entire basis upon which men are paid must be altered. This can only be effected after the toilers have formed a world organization which must first of all establish the new principle of payment. That principle should be that no man's wages will be mea-

sured by his necessities, but instead upon the basis of what he can and does produce. No man should be paid upon any other basis. The establishment of this principle affects the toiler and his master because it would be a reversal of the present order between industrial capital and labour. The position now is that those who sow do not reap; whereas under the altered principle the harvest would go to the toiler and not to the watered stocks. After such a basis of payment has been secured — through organization — the division of the product among the toilers becomes a matter which concerns only themselves. They can and should distribute what they receive in proportion to what each man produces. There should be no restraint put upon the production of any men and no uniform wages. All attempts to etablish uniform wages tend to fix the average wage on the basis of the minimum production of a given man and are calculated to keep compensation at a low level. It is precisely the same as a group of boys at shool. If the whole class must wait for the most backward of its members, a great part of the time of all others is lost and they achieve the minimum result for their expenditure.

I believe it to be due to a wrong conception of the position of labour in industrialism that this principle has not been recognized by toilers, in so far as they have organized. Every man is worth something, but he should be paid upon the basis of his production. Nothing should be done to penalize the highly efficient or to debar the ones who are not efficient, but as one clearly has a greater value than the other, both should be paid according to what they are worth. This can result in practice only by payment upon the basis of production. Such payment is a just and equitable basis as between the employer and all employees, considered as a whole, and nothing can be said against it as a fair basis of a division of compensation among the members constituting the whole.

Let there be applied to industrialism the principles of a changeless Nature which renders to every man



according as he sows, which gives nothing to him who does not sow; where ten talents go to the ten talent man and one talent is not withheld from the one talent man. Upon this principle the world would belong to those who toil instead of being owned, as it now is, by the ones who do not toil.

This change can be realized without violence. It can never result from violence, because any great upheaval of Society would create a new ruling caste which would never be the mob. By peaceful world-organization the toilers may become the dignified masters of the world. By violence they will degenerate into an enslaved rabble. The fact that millions of men belive they can obtain justice only through the destruction of existing institutions by violence strongly emphasizes a dangerous aspect of the social unrest which deserves the gravest consideration of all who would promote the large interests of mankind. The terrible evils of our modern society are not primarily evils of administration. They are economic, not polittcal defects. They arise not from any form of government, but rather from the use which industrialism is able to make of the lives and fortunes of men in peace and in war. It is the same in republics as in kingdoms because rulers will always be the instruments by which plutocracy seeks to attain its ends. This tendency cannot be controlled through any form of government. It must be checkmated by action independent of all governments.

So long as a few men representing the modern feudalism of plutocracy can so control nations as to form alliances and group humanity into various armed camps, surrounded by what we term boundaries, just so long will these combinations destroy mankind through war. There is no nationality for capitalism and there should be none for toil. National boundaries are a stupid and senseless relic of feudalism and class rivalry. They have been the occasion of all international wars and they have not the slightest importance for any toiler. Whether capitalism draws its imaginary lines along one or the other side of some lake, river or mountain

it is the same for the toilers. They are still homeless on both sides of all these lines and the should no longer be so blind as to destroy one another in order to double the income, the power and the arrogance of one or another group of plutocracy.

The earth should belong to the toilers. They have paid for it over and over again to men who never had any better title to it than the toilers themselves and yet these millions are homeless. And more than this; they are now used and destroyed in ways more shameful and barbarous than at any time in the long and gloomy history which records their pathetic struggles for the right merely to live and toil. It was sufficiently monstrous that capitalism should take the product of the life toil of every generation, without at the same time forcing its victims to kill one another and yet the present ghastly murder of the common man follows the most tremendous exploitation of that class ever recorded on the pages of time. Never were the outrages of capitalism against labour so vast and monumental as in this generation and never did the ambition and greed of the few take so terrible a toll of human life. The millions, whose toil was stolen by plutocracy, were forced to murder each other by that same plutocracy in violation of every interest of the toilers and contrary to every pretention of the boasted civilization which has deluded, robbed and finally destroyed the common man.

The objects which labouring men desire to attain can be realized only through peaceful means by organization. Too many toilers have already been murdered by plutocracy. Let them refrain from murdering themselves. The vast wealth they have so patiently created should be utilized for the benefit of the class which created it. Their noble institutions must be made the imperishable tokens of their long struggle toward freedom. The monuments built by the hands of toil must be held in trust for future generations as a heritage bequeathed to them by centuries of human aspiration, suffering and despair.

It will be difficult to raise any objection to the



course I have suggested, so far as it concerns the toilers. It will be generally conceded that a world organization of labour would be able to exercise final and arbitrary power, but it will be contended that such an organization can never be formed. The toiler is regarded by his masters as too short-sighted, ignorant and jealous, ever to take the great steps which will lead to economic liberty for himself and terminate the arrogance of this master. The press, which speaks for capitalism, will point to the dreary failures of the past efforts of toilers to unite and will urge them to use existing means of arbitration and parliamentary action to obtain their rights.

If the toilers are well advised they will realize that so long as they rely upon the old expedients and remain unorganized they will continue to be slaves. As they have the strength to move the wheels of the world they should acquire the power to stop those wheels.

Under the whip of necessity and the orders of their masters they move as automatic ports of the great mechanism of modern life. They are punctual to the stroke of the clock. They are always at their posts. It may be said that it is their necessity and the brains of their masters which make them the indispensable part of the great, and dependable industrial machine and that such an organization as I have urged the toilers to form, will never be formed because they will not or cannot act without these two elements; that so long as they have something to eat and are not led by a class to which they do not belong, they will do nothing to achieve world unity and power.

It is precisely upon this point that I would appeal to the self-interest, the pride and the dignity of the toilers. They are frankly inferior to their masters in the qualities which relate to the acquisition and use of power. They have toiled with their hands and their masters have toiled with their heads, but the difference in their position economically is far greater than the inequality of intelligence between them. The men who are capable of directing labour for a common employer

are intelligent enough to organize that labour for its own freedom. There is ample ability in the underpaid managers, superintendents and foremen of the industrial army to direct that army to effective and general union and they owe it to their comrades to do so. They must lay aside, nationality and all other questions which are used by capitalism to divide and submerge them and recognize that they have a general and common interest throughout the world and that they are, one and all, natural members of a universal brotherhood which can rise out of its slavery only through union of action for a common end.

If the immortal dreamers, philosophers, poets, musicians and artists, who have bequeathed to earth the whole of its intellectual and moral riches had carried away the products of toil we would not complain, but the contrary is true. They who create all the material wealth carry their grist to the mill of those who do not create any intellectual or moral wealth. The great benefactors of humanity (who are responsible for the whole of its material, intellectual and moral capital) are one and all poor. The material riches go to those who do not sow and the ones whose intellect and ethics have given to mankind its imperishable glory are not the ones who have received the product of toil.

Into the great treasure houses of civilization there are poured two steady streams of wealth. The procession of toilers passes through one portal and leaves its treasures behind. The splendid pageant of intellectual and moral genius enters another portal and lays its stern and beautiful tributes at the feet of a humanity which bids it go its way with empty hands. And so the great absorbing and noncreative caste sits in sullen and arrogant splendour in the mighty temples built by labour, by enthusiasm and by dreams. It brings nothing of value to its stations of exalted power and it goes its way to be replaced by others as useless as itself.

It is due precisely to the fact that a power exists which can dominate the whole of the great elements upon which rest the material and moral splendour of



man, that the only ones who have any interest in the preservation of these indispensable classes have no force sufficient to make their will supreme. If these two great factors to which all progress is due, could unite in a world brotherhood they would create a new world. If the millions who toil and the few who dream, would unite, there would be an end of plutocracy, of international murder and national exploitation, misery and want. It is because the masses toil and the dreamers dream, while plutocracy neither toils nor dreams — but organizes — that plutocracy has supreme power and the toilers and dreamers are powerless.

These pages are an appeal to the toilers and dreamers in every land to make common cause for the salvation of their common humanity and for the creation of a new world.

I make an appeal to their honour and to the divinity which is in all men, to the debt they owe to their children and to the generations who will otherwise inherit their pathetic and miserable existence; that they rise as one man and by peaceful means, put an end to the world-tyranny of a false and mendacious capitalism.

Let them surprise the world by their intelligence and power of union, to the same vast extent that they have enriched, honoured and blessed the world by their patience, their genius, their suffering and their toil.

*Steinhof Castle.*
*Lucerne.*

JOHN DE KAY.

The other chapters of "The World Allies" were as follows:


Chapter I. Conquest of nature and of man.
Chapter II. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.
Chapter III. Nationalism and language.
Chapter IV. Religion and man's moral position.
Chapter V. Bank, stock exchanges and wealth.
Chapter VI. Trusts, labour and human nature.
Chapter VII. The toilers, the press and world-power.
Chapter VIII. Imperial men and women.
Chapter IX. Economic rivalry in Europe.
Chapter X. The rise of the German people.
Chapter XI. Labour, industrialism and the responsability for the present war.
Chapter XII. Liberty and despotism.
Chapter XIII. The toilers and representative governments.
Chapter XIV. The toilers and the terms of peace.
Chapter XV. Cabinets, wars and the masses.
Chapter XVI. Plutocracy, labour and subsidized institutions.
Chapter XVII. An appeal to the dreamers and toilers.


## BY THE SAME AUTHOR


Longings. . . . . 1907
The Weaver. . . . . 1908
Judas (a drama) . . . . . 1910
Thoughts . . . . . 1911
Brown Leaves . . . . . 1911
The People's Money . . . . . 1912
Dictators of Mexico. . . . . 1914
Love and other Songs . . . . . 1916
Immortality . . . . . 1916
Women and the new Social State* . . . 1918


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